FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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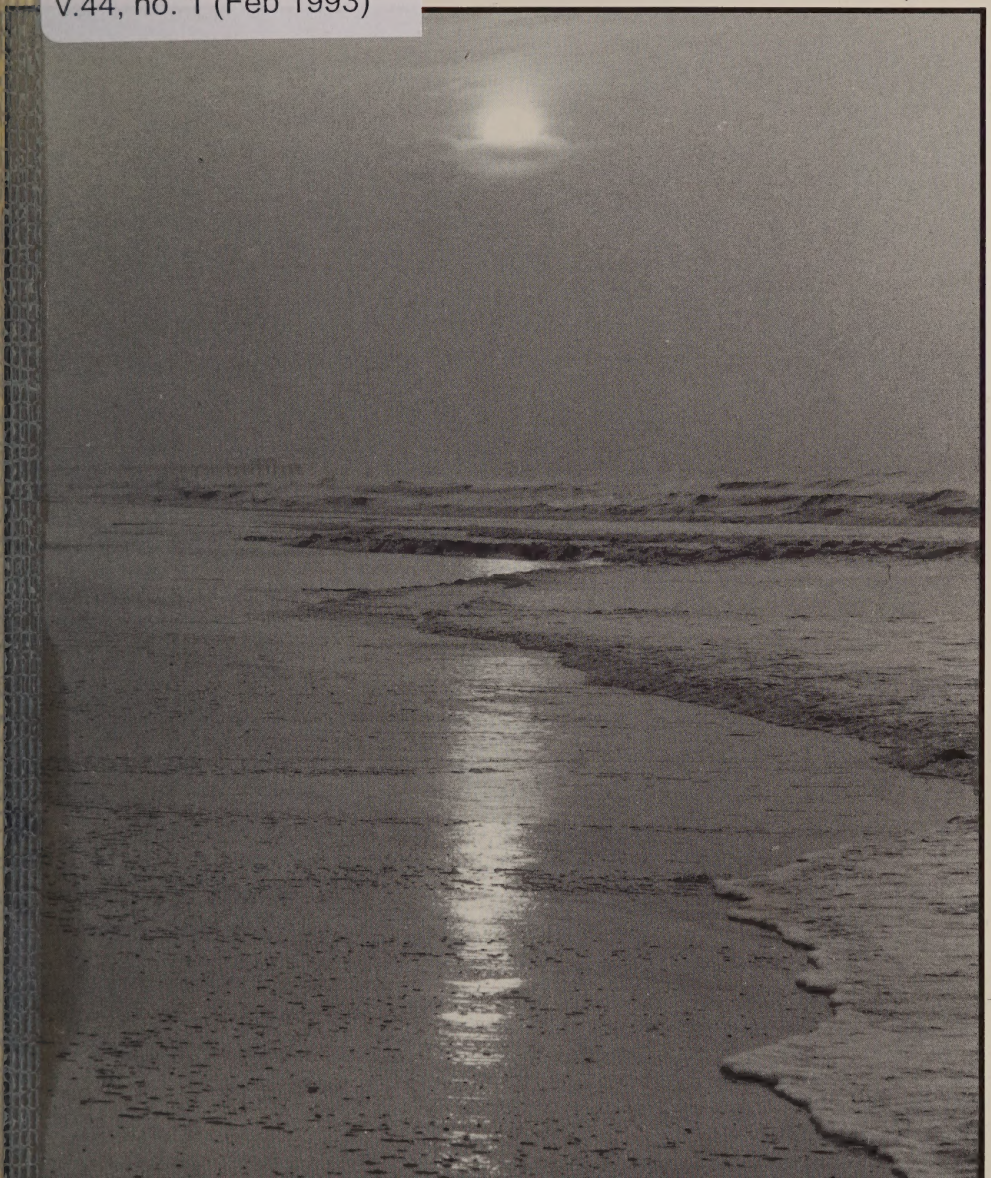

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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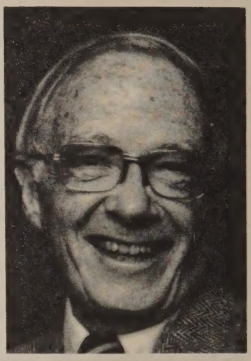
Cover photograph by William M. Stephens



"Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace," St. Francis prayed. What a tremendous prayer! "*Thy* peace." Not just the absence of war with all its horrors, but something far more ultimate. "The peace that passeth all understanding." What can that mean? How can we understand that peace and its power to change us and our world irrevocably?

Surely, we would all like to be at peace–with our family and friends, our neighbors, the rest of the world. But on our terms. The problem arises because of the difference between the way we want things to be–our way–and the way they often are. The most satisfying solution is often to blame someone else.

Most of us understand, however, in our heart of hearts, that the only person we can change is ourself, and that somehow we have to let go of our stubborn, willful insistence that our beliefs and desires come first, and take precedence over all others, at all costs.

But how to let go of our unloving attitudes toward those who displease us, one way or another? How to let go of our anger, resentment, fear, selfishness? How to become an instrument of God's peace? God's love?

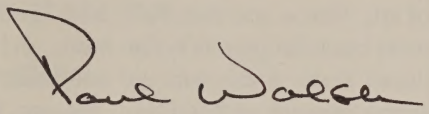
The best answer I know of is both very simple and very difficult: the daily, disciplined practice of prayer and meditation. It's difficult–especially in the cold dark of early morning in February–to leave the warm comfort of bed early and begin the day with a half hour of prayer and meditation.

But when we settle into stillness, in that space in our house or apartment made sacred by dedicating it to the practice of prayer and meditation, we start to feel more at peace with ourself. (And without inner peace there can be no effective peace with anyone else.)

As we patiently keep our attention focused on the meditative practice that we have found works best for us, we subtly and incrementally strengthen, day by day, those qualities of loving kindness, of compassionate understanding, of putting others first, that make us an instrument of God's peace.

And other people notice and feel healed by the peace that emanates from you. Because each of us is interconnected with all other living beings, every generous thought and act sends ripples throughout the universe and adds to the store of goodness that is available to us in prayer and meditation.

If peace is to pervade the whole planet, each of us must become more peaceful. Must become an instrument of God's peace. A good way to start is with a half hour of prayer and meditation, even–or especially–on the cold, dark mornings of February!



Paul Walsh

Praying before meals is an ancient tradition—and a very modern one. Today more and more people are pausing before meals to remember the Divine Source of our nourishment. Remembering God cuts through the pace of the day—whether it is too fast or too slow—and creates a feeling of stillness, if only for a few moments. One returns to one's self, to one's soul, and connects to the souls of others present, in a way possible only through prayer.

In *One Hundred Graces*, a little book from Bell Tower which is a work of art, Marcia and Jack Kelly have assembled a hundred of the world's most beautiful prayers before meals, and Christopher Gausby has reproduced them in exquisite red and black calligraphy. Drawing from the sacred literature of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Sufism, Islam, and many other sources, they show that all people are one in the universal practice of thanking and praising God for daily blessings, like a meal.

As one grace before meals, the Kellys suggest a lovely poem by Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things:"

When despair for the world grows in me
and I awake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and
    my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in its beauty on the water,
    and the green heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world
    and am free.

This book is a treasure and would make a wonderful gift for someone you love.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

The prayer on the following page is also from One Hundred Graces.

Beloved Lord ✧
almighty God ✧
through the
rays of the sun ✧
through the
waves of the air ✧
through the
all-pervading
life in space ✧
purify and revivify me,
and I pray,
heal my body, heart,
and soul ✧
Amen ✧

Nayaz

by Hazrat Inayat Khan

The inner life does not consist in closing the eyes and looking inward. The inner life is to look outwardly *and* inwardly and to find one's Beloved everywhere. But God cannot be made a Beloved unless the love element is awakened sufficiently. Those who hate their enemy and love their friend cannot call God the Beloved, for they do not know God. When love comes to its fullness, then one looks at the friend with affection, on the enemy with forgiveness, on the stranger with sympathy.

Hazrat Inayat Khan

You do not want to be half dead, but fully alive. Have you understood that the desire for the Spirit, the desire for the living God, leads you to life and peace?

Brother Roger of Taizé

This is an absolute necessity for everyone. You must have a room, or a certain hour or so in a day, where you don't know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anyone. . . . This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen.

Joseph Campbell

If you only knew that you are free!

Farid ad-din Attar

If you could ever look into the sun, your eyes would be burned, and if you could ever understand the reality of things, your understanding would be completely shattered.

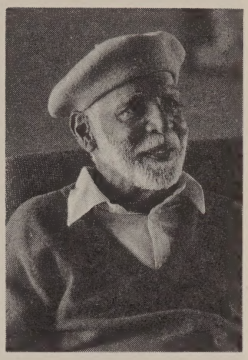
Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan

May none of God's wonderful works keep silence, night or morning. Bright stars, high mountains, the depths of the seas, sources of rushing rivers: may all these break into song as we sing to God. May all the angels in the heavens reply: Amen, Amen, Amen. Power, praise, honor, eternal glory to God, the only giver of grace. Amen, Amen, Amen.

Source Unknown

Spiritual Renewal in the Second Half of Life

EKNATH EASWARAN



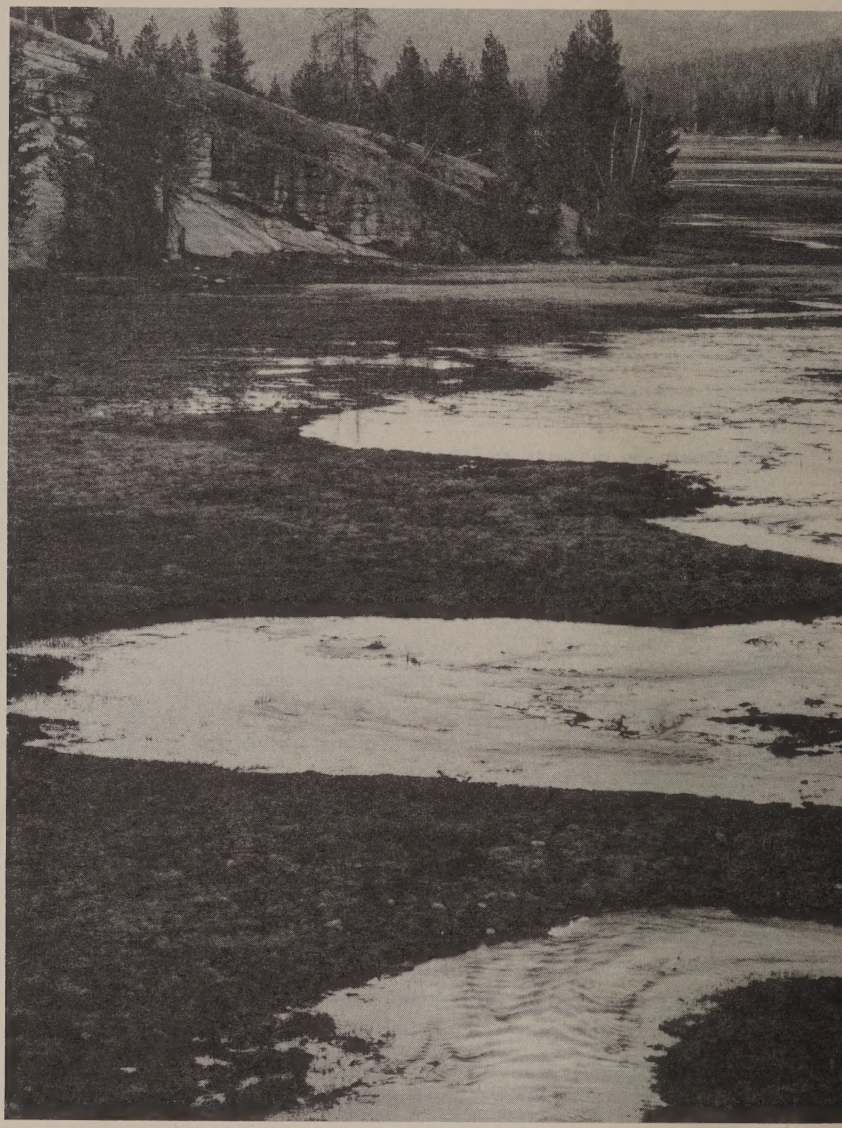
The elderly, the suffering, and the dying are often pushed to the edges of society, where the resources of wisdom they possess go untapped. To help bring them back into society and full living, Eknath Easwaran is creating a unique community.

I have observed that the vast majority of people do not know how to prepare for old age and death. Recently, one of my friends, who is a very devoted lady, was confiding in me how miserable she had become because of the unpleasant surprises brought on by old age. While I sympathized in part, I also pointed out that it is the second half of life that is the most important for our spiritual well-being, and should actually be richer and more rewarding than the first part of life.

My thesis is that while the first part of life has its advantages, particularly physically, it is the second part of life that is more fruitful. Over the years we naturally become wiser and more detached and are therefore capable of making a greater contribution to all those around.

I believe that the first part of life is only preparation for the second half–the part that really counts. During the first half of life we are free to make many mistakes: running after pleasure and profit and freely indulging our desires. For most people, the first half of life is a time of learning–learning what is important. A time for learning that money, expensive houses, cars and trips, gourmet food and seductive relationships are not what will

One of the great spiritual teachers of the twentieth century, Eknath Easwaran lives with his community at the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, Petaluma, CA. For more information about Setu or to order Easwaran's books, telephone (707) 878-2369.



Mari Kane

ultimately bring us happiness. At best, they provide only temporary pleasure. At worst they leave us alienated, addicted and bitter.

By the time we are in our forties, it has begun to dawn on some of us that we need to look elsewhere for satisfaction, for answers. Perhaps the notion of our own mortality begins to dawn on us. We are at last ready for personal transformation and deeper spiritual growth.

To accommodate these seekers who are desirous of making the second half of life a rich and rewarding experience, I have launched a new project: SETU, "The Bridge." The Upanishads say, "The Self is the bridge between this life and the next." The Setu Center will be a residential and retreat center, a spiritual community, the purpose of which will be to bridge the gap between generations, between scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdom, between the East and the West, and between life and death. The program will concentrate on helping participants build the spiritual understanding that makes death simply the closing of one chapter of spiritual growth and the opening of a new and better one.

Setu will be a community where men and women of retirement age can share with younger seekers a life of meditation and service designed to harness the accumulated wisdom of the second half of life and release one's full spiritual potential. Participants in Setu will follow the eight-point program I have followed daily in my own life, which consists of meditation, repetition of the mantra or Holy Name, slowing down, one-pointed attention training the senses, putting others first, reading in world mysticism, and satsang or spiritual fellowship.

Setu will be nondenominational, nonsectarian, and nonritualistic. Persons of all religious persuasions are welcome; the only spiritual requirement is a dedication to the practice of meditation along our lines and the desire for deeper spiritual understanding.

Setu will not be a medical facility, but an extended family residence centered on meditation and *satsang* or spiritual growth. Residents will each have a room in a house shared by others, with regular meditation and inspiration. Selfless service and the productive use of residents' time will be a cornerstone.

A typical day will include meditation in the morning and evening, and a talk by me or a workshop on one of the eight points by one of my long-time students. Selfless work will include volunteer work in the local community, such as working with the library or history center, or assisting with the publication of our books.

I hope that this community will grow into what might be called an "ecovillage"; people living together in harmony with themselves, with others and with the environment.

The second half of life holds out a unique promise. Setu offers the opportunity to live and work with others on a higher goal and to discover within oneself a living presence that is beyond change and death.

It is as this promise unfolds that the real potential of the human personality is released, and a lifetime of skills, experience, and wisdom can be harnessed in selfless service and inner growth. This development brings rich meaning to the second half of life and gradually dispels fear and misunderstanding of death.

The Self is the bridge between this life and the next.

During the second part of life, at Setu, we can learn to defy all the selfish desires that human existence is prey to, hundreds of them, through the practice of meditation and the allied disciplines. This is not negating desires; it is unifying them—transforming them from selfish to selfless, from individual to universal. This unification of desires leads to the integration of personality in its full glory. Instead of living just for one person, we live for the welfare of all, for the happiness of all. The partitions of the ego are down. We live in all creatures, which means we live a thousandfold more. Everything is magnified: our sympathy, our sensitivity, our strength, our love, our capacity to give and help and serve.

This is not the extinction of personality; it is its perfection. As Saint Francis de Sales puts it, the individual personality merges in the divine, as the light of a star when the sun arises "is ravished into and absorbed in the sun's sovereign light, within which it is happily mingled and allied."

I hope to have the initial Setu prototype ready for occupancy in the Spring of 1993 so that it may serve as a model for similar facilities all over the country, and perhaps the world.

Quilting

JEROME B. ROBBEN

"Times come when we think something is worn out or empty. We can toss it away, or we can make it a part of a quilt."

Since my earliest years, Grandmother Anna was an embodiment of wisdom. She came to this country from Poland and had in her repertoire of stories and axioms an exciting mixture of Old World and American subjects. These were handed out like sweets–to be savored and anticipated–whenever I visited or stayed with her.

One example has remained with me these many years. I was twelve years old and spending the summer with Grandmother as usual. Every afternoon around three o'clock we sat quietly on the huge porch which ran across the entire front of the house. Grandmother rocked gently and I sat on the porch swing. We'd sing old songs and she would tell me stories about her youth and about relatives I never met. This particular day, however, she was very quiet–gazing out across the fields and looking very peaceful and serene.

"What are you doing, Grandmother?" I asked.

"I'm quilting, little one." She smiled at me, then turned to gaze back at the vastness of corn growing just beyond the fence.

"But Grandmother, you're just sitting there."

"No, little one, I'm quilting. Most times I'm quilting, even when I just sit."

My consternation must have shown, for she continued to explain:

"Quilting is just taking little bits and pieces of things you'd throw away or you might think were unimportant or worthless at first, and sewing them together. Folks use things up and think that means they aren't worth anything, but that isn't true at all. Everything is good, little one. Everything serves a purpose, even if it's not the one we think it should serve. I put together pieces of old shirts, skirts long worn, all sorts of things like that and put them into a quilt. They serve a new purpose and form a new thing of beauty."

"Live longer, little one, and you will see that life is like that. Times come when we think something is worn out or empty. We can toss it

Jerome Robben is a writer living in St. Louis, MO.

Tom Dunham

away, or we can make it a part of a quilt. Take a section of it and sew it into place. Simple as that."

"Many times these things belong to someone precious to us. And that gives them a very special value. When we put them into our quilt they always remind us of those people. And best of all, when we finish the quilt we're working on, we can gift someone with it. Then all the precious memories and good feelings intensify because we give them to someone else to experience. And it is handed down so that the memories live on and the people they remind us of live on, too, in those memories."

"Kind of like an heirloom, Grandmother?"

"Like a treasure, little one. A Treasure you can make in your mind. Take your memories and your feelings and sew them together to make a quilt—bright and cheerful and warm. Remember the people you've met, the pets you've hugged, the victories you achieved, the touches you've received and those you've given. Take melodies of songs and melodies of creatures, songs of the rain and the stream, and of the rustling corn. Remember the surprises. The faces, the hands of those who love you. The gifts received and the ones wished for. Trees in bloom, flowers that suddenly pop out in brilliant colors; the sweet smell of honeysuckle, the squeal of a baby pig anxious for its mother. Remember the vibrating purr of our cat, the steady beat of your mother's heart. God has given you many things to put into your quilt; and will continue to bless you with countless more."

Take your memories and your feelings and sew them together to make a quilt—bright and cheerful and warm. Remember the people you've met, the pets you've hugged, the victories you achieved, the touches you've received and those you've given.

"Today I'm putting up pieces of memories I have of your grandfather and how he plowed this land with love. I have many pieces for my quilt, little one, for he spent many years nurturing this farm and bringing in crops to delight the soul. Look at the corn. It dances with his memory!"

"Quilts are things of beauty that only we can make. It takes time; it takes a keen eye and a loving heart to gather up the pieces and arrange them in a design. But, oh my! what a joy the finished quilt is!"

Many years have passed since that day—and Grandmother, herself, has become a part of many of my spirit-quilts. Her techniques remain as fresh as the day she explained them to me: save bits and pieces of experiences and sew them together into a quilt, search for the good and the potential in all things. Sound advice for quilting—and for living our lives.

SPIRITUALITY RESOURCES

The Roll is a quarterly publication for people interested in contemplative prayer and East–West exchange. The magazine carries exploratory, scholarly articles as well as contributions by readers concerning their personal religious experiences. A donation of $10 is requested in partial support of printing and mailing costs. The balance is provided by the Editors as a service to contemplatives.

Write: Schola, 3425 Forest Lane, Pfafftown, NC 37040-9545

June Moreau

Someone is riding
a great horse
along the River
of The White Dove
and in its arms
the wind cradles
the golden violin

On this pillow
filled with sweet fern
close your eyes
with the blue flowers
in prairies of sky
Hear the silver voices of stars.

This violin
that is my heart
has been given
the slender bow
of spring wind.

Come find me
the way the wind
deports itself
in the branches
of the blue spruce.

A widely published poet, artist, and mountaineer, June Moreau is known for the exceptional power and grace of the images she creates. She makes her home in Lexington, MA.

In The Sky Of Your Heart

You can keep anything
in the sky of your heart.
April mornings steeped in green hills,
sun-tinged orioles,
clouds reflecting the glow of jonquils,
rain-blue songs of a flute
great meadows, a forest of oak
and always the flock of sparrows.

Yes, you can keep anything
in the everywhere sky of your heart.

Poem Written In a Zen Monastery

You can't read the words in this book
without picking the flowers
growing profusely between the lines.
Even in my most blissful dream
I could not have dreamed such colors.
On the next to the last word
there was one flower that had more petals
than a chrysanthemum
with each petal changing colors mysteriously.
I did not dare to pick this flower.

Hearing the wind chimes from an open window
I began to arrange the flowers
in an earthen vase.
Suddenly the flower that I had not dared
to pick blossomed in the midst of my bouquet

and a child riding a tiger
came joyously out from behind the sun.

June Moreau atop

Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire

Marjorie E. Lilly

What Shall I Give Myself

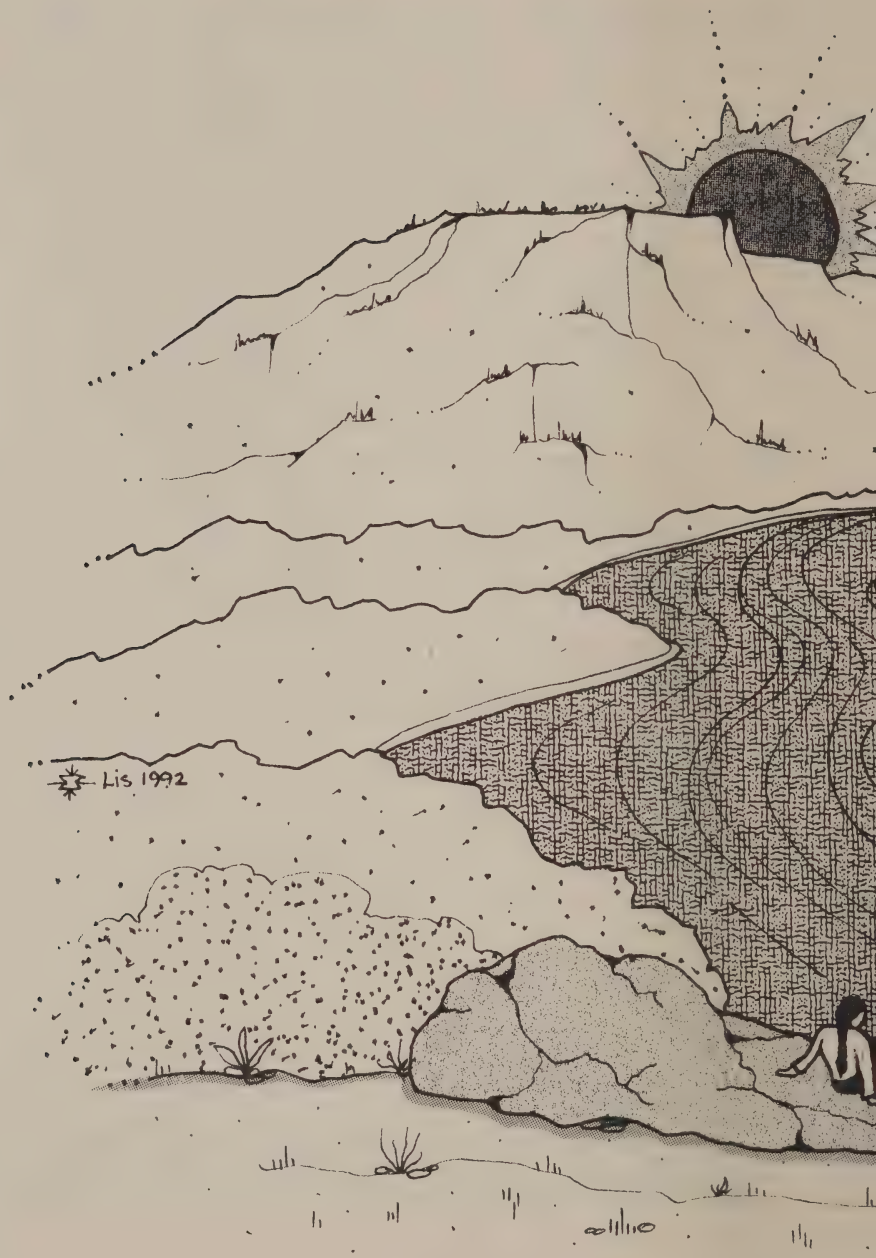
I shall give myself
each leaf on the willow
the scarlet tanager and blue dolphins
from our winterdream.
The white pond lilies in the crystal light
and the note he left for me
stranded in the pages of time.
I shall give myself
the whole month of May we shared
with the apple trees in full blossom
and the heart shaped stone
his name for me written on it.
    There is a ruby, always a ruby
in the pain of losing him.
There is always a blue butterfly
that perched on the rim of his hat,
my warm hand like a bracelet around his wrist
the stars of noon our kiss.

Rock Ritual X

ROBERT O'ROURKE

It is time
    to return to my rock in the river.
Whenever the cares of this world oppress me
    it is to this place I must go . . .
To sit awhile
    and let the rhythm of the river
  flow through me.
To experience once again
    quiet calm,
        cool tranquility,
            soft serenity.
All of nature soothing my soul:
    The breeze is pure here,
        The song of a bird tremulous,
            The river clear and free.
A forever place to relinquish and learn
    endurance from a rock,
        faithfulness from a river,
            melodies from a bird,
                the breath of life in a breeze.
It is time for me to return . . .
For you too?

Folk art carver, writer, poet, Bob O'Rourke makes his home close to nature in Colorado. Lisa Smith, whose illustration accompanies this article, is Director of the Squash Blossom Art Gallery in Aspen, CO. Her illustration portrays a real place, "her" rock in the Colorado River, Eastern Utah.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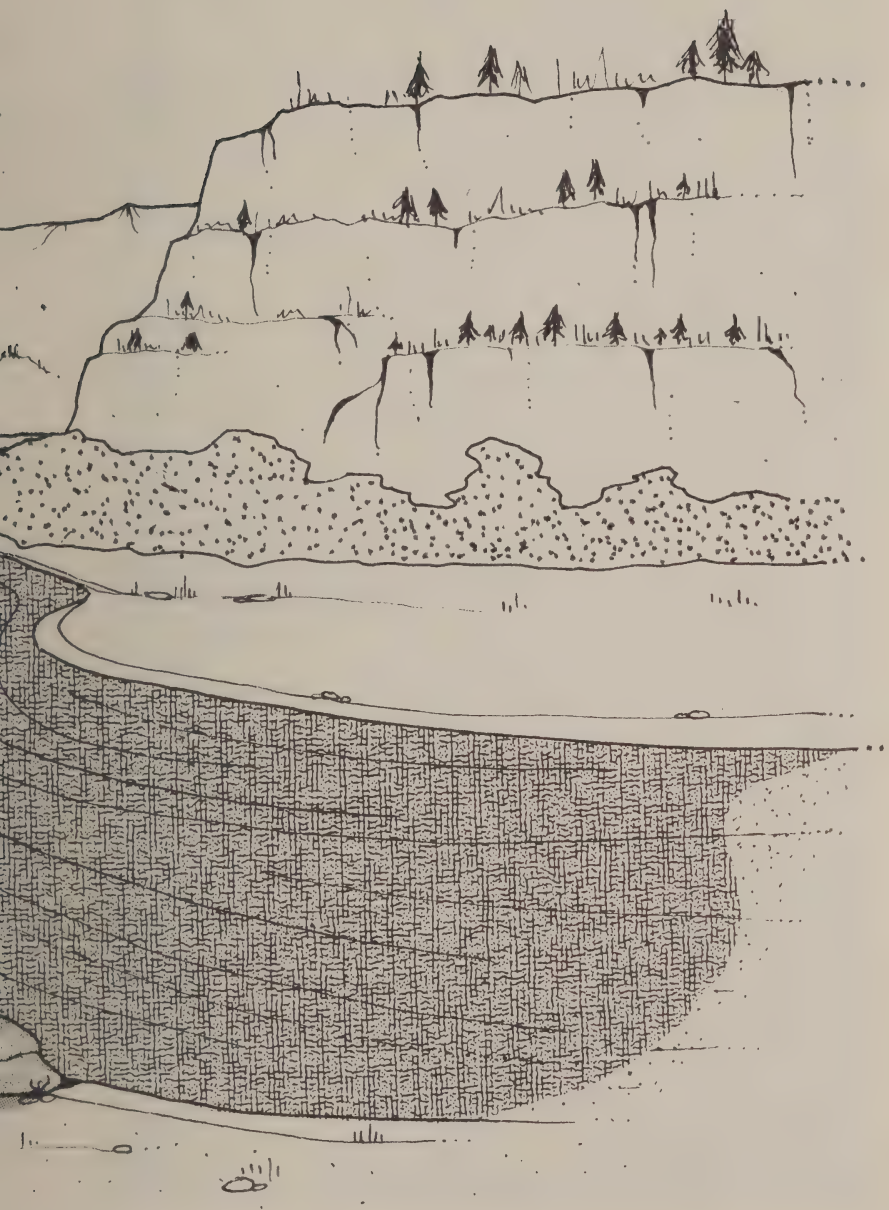


Lisa Smith

What Is Your Symbol For God?

MARY CATHERINE SMITH

What symbol helps you to connect to God in the midst of your daily life? When I heard a lecturer ask that question, immediately a little bowl of cereal came to mind. How did such a mundane, simple thing get charged with power to evoke the Divine? Here is how it came about.

It was to have been my day of departure, the day I was to return to my convent home in the U.S.A. after 37 days in one of our convents in Europe. It was my birthday and my mother and sister were looking forward to meeting me at the airport in Philadelphia. However, all my plans changed five days earlier when I was asked to remain longer to complete some unfinished business. Instead of a transatlantic flight for my birthday there was another wonderful gift in store for me!

I awoke the morning of my birthday to sounds at my bedroom door. As I opened my door, a little array of cards and gifts on the floor greeted me, giving me a joyful start. I was quite surprised by this loving attention, and during my prayer time. I commenced a litany of thanks for all the gifts and blessings and graces, great and small, that had come my way. At the end of my prayer came a small wish: for a bowl of cereal for my breakfast. The ordinary breakfast in our European convents is fruit and bread with meat or cheese. For 37 days I had not seen *my* ordinary breakfast of a bowl of cereal. It was a crazy sort of wish in light of all that had come to me spiritually and materially during those weeks of my stay in Germany, and you can imagine my surprise when at breakfast a Sister quietly wished me "Happy Birthday," and presented me with a little bowl of cereal!

My eyes still fill up when I think of that amazing experience. That small bowl of cereal has become for me a symbol of a loving, caring, personal God. A God who delights when we receive joy. When I am tempted to think that my prayer is not being answered, that symbolic breakfast cereal comes to mind and I look around to see how God is perhaps answering me in unexpected little ways to which I may not yet be open.

Sr. Mary Catherine, a freelance writer, is a Holy Spirit Adoration Sister in Philadelphia, PA.

Tom Dunham

Thoughts on Loving God

WILLIAM M. STEPHENS

"How do we love an ocean of peace that stretches endlessly with no boundaries, no shore, no bottom, and no surface?"

Meher Baba tells us that the aim of life is to love God, and the goal of life is to become One with God. (So what does that say about the ambitions and pursuits of 99% of us, 99% of the time?) If we can accept Baba's words as truth, and really believe them, our life may well be transformed. For if loving God is the only worthwhile endeavor, then all other plans and schemes, regardless of their importance in the worldly sense, are by comparison superficial and of no consequence.

But loving God is "no game for the weak and faint-hearted," as Meher Baba also makes clear. To love God is to lose one's self in the Divine . . . to dance in blissful agony at the tip of a candle's flame . . . to penetrate into the essence of God's being while still performing our duties in the world.

Of course, all religions tell us to love God. But how do we go about it? How do we love the Infinite, which is beyond all attributes and concepts of the mind? How do we love an ocean of peace that stretches endlessly, with no boundaries, no shore, no bottom, and no surface?

It seems obvious that to love God in the abstract is beyond us. It is like loving deep sleep. We need it, we crave it, and at times we would rather have it than anything else on earth. But what is it, exactly? We cannot know, for we are unconscious when we experience it.

So loving the infinite aspect of God is impossible for us. But to love God in the form of the Christ, or God-man, is not only possible, it is extremely practical. For the Christ is all we can know of God, and all we can aspire to be. In the perfect form of the Christ, God is simultaneously both man and God. He is the bridge between the finite world and all eternity.

Adi K. Irani, a close disciple of Avatar Meher Baba for fifty years, often said that the God-man is greater even than God. "For God as God is not

Bill Stephens, an attorney and writer who lives in Nashville, Tennessee, recently returned from his eighth spiritual pilgrimage to India. If you wish more information on Meher Baba, you may write to Bill in care of Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

man," he would say. "And God as man is not God. But God in the form of the God-man is *both* God and man."

Why does Almighty God descend into the world of forms? Why does the Highest of the High take on the limitations of the human form and come down to our level? According to Meher Baba, God does it to give the world a spiritual push. And this is accomplished by awakening the Divine in us. In us God is bound. So, from time to time (about every 700 to 1400 years, Meher Baba says) God descends as a human being so that we can learn to love God by loving the Christ. This is the divine drama God has played for eons of time. By freeing each of us (eventually) from the endless round of births and deaths, God experiences in every person the culmination of the divine journey from unconsciousness to God-realization.

The Divine Beloved is always there in the heart.

And how can we help God do this work? By loving God. And how do we learn to love God? We start by thinking of God, praying to God, reading about God, and spending time with persons who love God. Eventually, we find ourselves literally falling in love. And when that happens, God reciprocates by falling in love with us. This is the divine romance that the great poets, mystics, dramatists, and composers have attempted to illuminate since the beginning of time. But true illumination comes only from God, the object of our search.

When in the course of our growth we become aware that God is with us always, and is closer than our own breath, we search for ways to keep the current flowing, to trap and fan the flame that lights our soul from time to time. We seek ways to produce that occasional surge of joy that no drug and no human pleasure can duplicate.

The flame comes and goes. The sense of God's presence may fade as pressures of life and work crowd God out of our consciousness. But the Divine Beloved is always there in the heart, and in our subconscious, and we must seek to make this Love our constant companion. One way is to constantly repeat God's holy name.

For many centuries monks and mystics have taught that the repetition of certain holy words is a powerful meditation that can be carried on in the midst of all activities. The word *Om* has been chanted in Buddhist and Hindus mantras for untold centuries. In the Middle Ages the Greek

William M. Stephens

Orthodox monks developed the famous Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner"), which was repeated constantly in the same way as a mantra. In Persia, the early Sufis chanted *Allahm, illaha.* A popular mantra in India for perhaps thousands of years is *Jai Ram, Sri Ram, Jai Jai Ram*; and in recent years millions of Americans have heard the mantra of the followers of the Hindu teacher Bhaktivedanta: *Hari Krishna, Hari Rama, Krishna Krishna, Hari Hari.*

Mantras that include a name of God, as most do, are especially effective because the repetition of the name imprints the subconscious mind. Remembering God is a way to awaken God in the heart. God is always there, of course, but, as Meher Baba says, fast asleep in most individuals. If we constantly call out, God will slowly awaken, and once fully awake, will never sleep again. So we must continue to call out the holy name, and God will not have time to even doze, much less fall asleep.

In 1921, when Meher Baba and a group of disciples set out to walk from Bombay to Calcutta, Baba told his followers to silently repeat, as they walked, a name of God associated with their own religion. Zoroastrians were to repeat *Ahuramazda*; Hindus: *Parabrahma, Paramatma*; Moslems: *Allah illaha*; and Christians: "God Almighty."

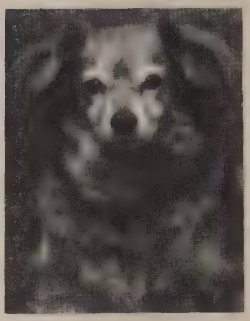
Meher Baba is not the first spiritual master to have told us that all religions are basically the same because God is always the same. In the nineteenth century, the Hindu master Paramahansa Ramakrishna likened God to the water in the River Ganges. There are different places along the river where people draw water, he said. At one place the Hindus fill their pots and call it *jal.* At another spot, the Christians fill their vessels and call it "water." But it is all the same, of course, no matter what you call it.

Ramakrishna was another advocate of the repetition of a name of God. He told a devotee:

> *Japa* means silently repeating God's name. When you chant this name with single-minded devotion, you can see God's form and realize the Divine Presence. Suppose there is a piece of timber sunk in the water of the Ganges and fastened with a chain to the bank. You proceed link by link, holding to the chain. Finally you are able to reach the timber. In the same way, by repeating God's name you become absorbed in God and finally realize God.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN



Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon St, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

Last year in your column concerning the grieving process, you referred to acceptance as the final stage of grief. Throughout this year, I have had some trouble getting to and remaining at this accepting place. Could you please speak a bit more about this?

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Still at a Loss

Dear Still at a Loss:

Thank you very much for writing to me again. I am relieved to learn that someone else out there has also been struggling with acceptance. Like you, I'd have to admit that I have not been at my most gracious this year.

If I gave anyone the impression in my original columns on grief that I had actually arrived at acceptance in the same way I would arrive home after a walk, I'm sorry for having misled you. I'm sure I even had myself fooled for a while.

In this first year without my buddy Captain, I've had moments and hours of acceptance. I've also had aches, pains, and pangs of missing at the same time. Acceptance comes and goes. I'm beginning to see that I may never fully accept the loss of my buddy, perhaps I am not meant to. Maybe there are just losses that cannot be accepted fully and forever. Acceptance seems to be an ongoing process, like grooming.

I'm sure you will be wondering how I've come to my slightly revised view on the grieving process. I've had a change of heart on the matter. Gurus sometimes have these. Quite by accident some months ago, I found myself packing away large bowls of Kibbles and Bits and engaging

in very soulful sniffs outside. These behaviors were puzzling to me until my buddy Barbara, who is good with dates and anniversaries, reminded me that Cappy had passed away about a year ago. My body was continuing to grieve and mourn all on its own even though my mind had forgotten the date. It was then that I realized that I actually hadn't arrived permanently at acceptance at all. I had been going back and forth between the various stages of grief, only touching acceptance from time to time.

Here is what I've learned about grief work this past year. Grieving doesn't end like the flea season. Grief work goes on beyond the second good frost. Mourning is not a process one is always able to live with quietly and gracefully. Grief isn't neat. Missing and remembering your beloved are two things you do while you live your life. At times, missing and remembering may *be* your life. I miss Cappy while I'm chewing my toenails. Sometimes I chew my toenails because I'm missing Cappy. I experience moments of acceptance when I'm eating Cheerios, when a squirrel crosses my path, or when my chest is rubbed. But I go back to missing more than you might imagine a guru would.

Although I still enjoy macaroni and cheese sauce and love stealing the aluminum tin it comes in, I've discovered one thing. Stealing the tin from *nobody* just doesn't have the same kick for me as it once did when I was stealing it from *somebody* named Captain. I keep stealing the tin from nobody only because old dogs have trouble with new tricks. When it was time for a walk, Captain would run to the door and shove me right out of the way so he would be first to get outside. Most of you know I am not the type to allow just *anybody* to push me around, but this particular anybody was *my* buddy. Outside, Cappy made the walks safer and more fun. I would have to keep trotting to keep up with him because I couldn't bear for him to get too far ahead. This helped me keep my slim figure. Cappy provided a much-needed pair of eyes as well as a reliable extra nose. Although I would experience concern over the equal sharing of food and headpats, being the only family dog isn't all it's cracked up to be either. You may get all the goodies, but when nothing is being dished out, you're first on line for that as well.

In this first year without Cappy, I've learned that remaining in the acceptance stage of grief is very much like learning to come when called. It requires hope, patience, praise, and constant review. I've learned that you cannot tamper with the grieving process. Forgetting to grieve doesn't work. It's inefficient. Grieving goes on despite your plans to

ignore or stuff it behind the couch with your old tennis ball. Even if you do not admit you are mourning, your body will be doing it.

For all of you out there who, like me, have been slip-sliding away from full acceptance all year but feel you *should* be through "it" by now, here is a brief reminder. Each of us heals in our own sweet time. As in everything, we carry on as best we can even though we may not do so quietly, sweetly, or gracefully. There are no magic biscuits for this. Some days, there is simply nothing else to be done for grief but to go out to the front lawn or backyard, go down to the basement, or go out to the porch, the balcony, or fire escape and howl at the moon. When all else fails, noise works. Believe in it.

Faithfully,
Angela

Cliff Moore

Grace is Pure Mystery . . .

NAN MERRILL

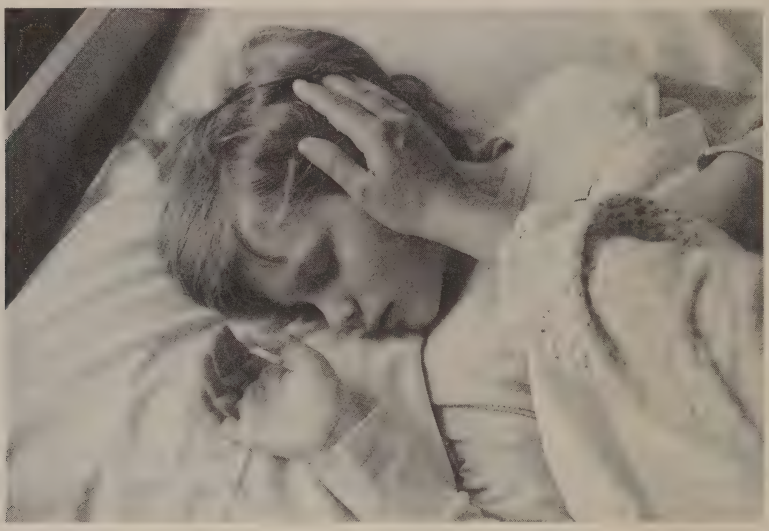
Fellowship in Prayer invites you to submit the story of your own "transforming experience." You do not need to be a professional writer. Just send your story to the Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ 08542.

Grace is pure mystery . . . and I shall forever be grateful for the blessing She bestowed on me about twenty-five years ago. While my husband and I were living in Florida with our five children, the fifth Navy move in twelve years, I often felt restless–especially during the early hours of morning. I developed the habit of awakening somewhere between two and four a.m. and would get up, go into one of the children's rooms and stare out the window.

One particular star became so familiar and personal, I began to think of it as "my" star and I would simply be with that star for close to an hour. Then I would return to bed. Strangely, I never questioned this ritual that for many months became as routine as brushing my teeth . . . meditating (though I'd never heard of that word then) in silence and solitude, praying without words, sending out unconsciously a great Cry from the depths of my being.

Then, quite unexpectedly, I AWAKENED one morning to find myself living a radically new way-of-being in the world. Gone was my robot-like life, gone was my need to be understood, gone were my inner fears and

A free lance writer, Nan Merrill has just finished a re-visioning of the Psalms and is the editor of a monthly newsletter, Friends of Silence. *She lives in a cottage in the woods with friends, retreatants and wildlife.*



Tom Dunham

restlessness. The only word that comes close to describing the deep peace and quiet joy which enveloped me like a cocoon, and which I could feel radiating from me, is Love. Everything within me and all I experienced without flowed . . . I felt totally in harmony with the universe. Yet, so long had I simply accepted all that the winds blew into my life, that I lived in this state of "grace" for ten days, assuming that I was somehow responsible for it. It felt so natural, as if I'd known it as a child or in some other distant place . . .

Though I dreaded going outdoors in Florida, even the heavy, hot, humid air of summer now seemed in balance with nature's harmony. The grass, flowers and trees seemed transparent–shimmering with colors that radiated and defined each blade, petal and leaf. I could see how each aspect fit into the Whole and I felt grateful to be a participant in Life's abundant beauty.

Never in those ten days did I hear an unkind word nor did I feel antipathy toward anyone or anything–in fact, quite the opposite. My family, friends, strangers and I all seemed to be interwoven in harmony with one another and all of creation. While shopping, I was not surprised to have individuals stop to share a problem with me, nor was I surprised

that I responded with such deep understanding and compassion. My shyness disappeared. Like the single leaf on a tree dancing with the breeze, I saw each person I encountered as a totally unique individual, yet part of a beautiful Whole.

During those days, I remember driving home from a day at the beach with the family and feeling so delighted with the camaraderie between us. Often, from 4:30 to dinnertime life was chaotic and unpleasant–especially after an all-day outing. Yet, here we were confined in a hot, sandy car in city traffic sharing happy memories of other places we had lived. When we stopped for a red light on a wooden bridge, my eyes locked with the sad eyes of an old man standing there. All at once I seemed to sense this man's pain and I sent him waves of love; I felt he received my offering and knew me as well. It was a Oneness I had not known before of soul-meeting-soul in silence. Though the honking of horns in cars behind us suddenly broke the Meeting, I can still close my eyes and re-capture those timeless moments.

Then one morning, I sensed something amiss as I awakened. Gone was the envelope of Love; gone was the inner peace and harmony. It was as if the lens of my inner eye, which had been clearly in focus, had suddenly become distorted and clouded over. For days I grieved, not knowing or understanding the loss. What I did realize was that I could no longer tolerate the old way of being, the robot-like life. I had tasted heaven on earth; I KNEW, as I had always sensed, there was more.

> Once love had found me, once love had taken me by the hand, there was no way I could stop the inner pilgrimage.

Now, I can point to this period as a rebirth, as a reawakening of the Child within me. I now understand that unless we become as children, we miss the freedom, harmony, peace and joy awaiting us in realm of true Life. But then, I only knew that somehow life was far more magnificent that I had known for so many years, I had forgotten it. I was faced with hard questions: Where to go with this life-changing gift? Who could help me claim it, renew it? Years of not being heard or understood compelled me to be silent, to withdraw inwardly and to begin a process of denial. I told no one of these wonder-filled days.

Within five years, however, I was to discover that once Life had found me, once Love had taken me by the hand, there was no way I could stop

the inner pilgrimage. Though the journey would entail struggle, pain and sacrifice, I was, without doubt, on the Way!

Only recently have I learned to walk this path with a bit of grace. For years, I fought the process, stumbled and fell (literally broke my ankle twice!), rebelled and strayed, regressed and betrayed my inner being–and yet, always the gifts of forgiveness, strength, courage, guidance and unconditional Love have ever been given whenever I had the humility to ask.

I've been given answers to so many unvoiced questions in this pilgrimage. I've learned to love the Mystery not needing to know the future. I no longer take Grace for granted–it is pure gift! I've accepted that my essential course of action is simply TO BE. With the help of many people, I've walked through my fears, and that has brought the freedom and joy of loving and living in a profound, yet simple, way-of-being close to nature.

When I talk about being in harmony with the universe, and my friends chuckle and roll their eyes at me, I can smile, too. Since discovering who I am, I don't need others to understand me. Wonder has become a friend–from the simplicity of each day's unfolding to the marvelous complexity of how interdependent we are with one another and all of Creation. Thus it is that gratitude is a constant companion as I continue to grow along the Emmaus road with the One who dwells in and among all of us!

Litany

Here in the palm of your hand is a hazelnut,
a small thing, round like a ball.
It is all that is made;
it is made by Love.
See in this little thing three truths:
God made it, God loves it,
God keeps it.
In these truths stay and grow.

ALL: God, of your goodness, give me yourself,
for you are sufficient for me.
In you alone is my all.

You will have pain and affliction,
trouble and strain and doubt.
But you shall not be overcome
and all shall be well.

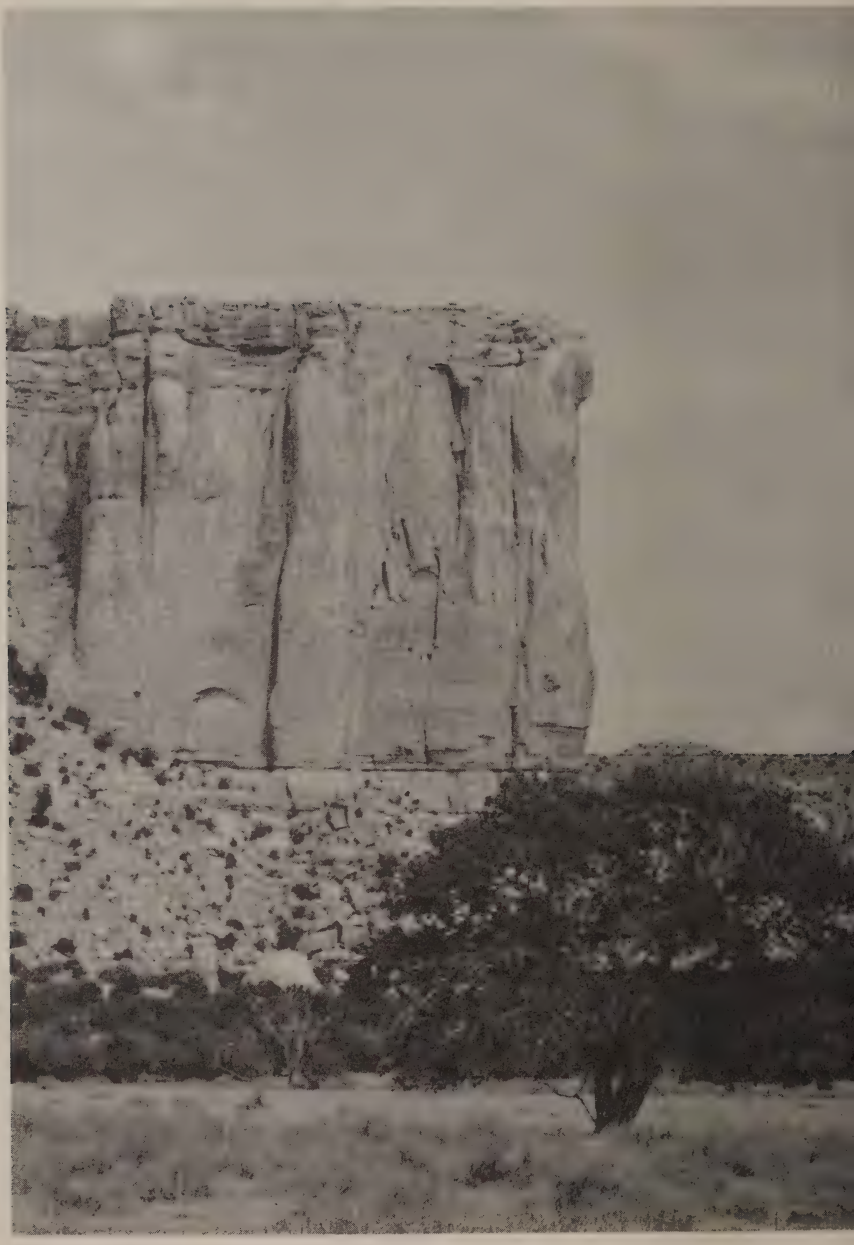
ALL: Yes, all shall be well,
and all shall be well.
I shall find my ground in God,
and shall see for myself
that all manner of things shall be well.

from "A Julian of Norwich Dialogue,"
A Light in the Darkness, *by J. Janda*

Give Me the Inward Vision

O Thou
who hast given me eyes
to see the light
that fills my room,
give me the inward vision
to behold Thee in this place.

Chandra Devanesen



Janet Gnall

My God, My Life, My Holy Joy

O Thou Supreme
most secret and most present,
most beautiful and
strong.
What shall I say,
my God,
my Life,
my Holy Joy?
What shall any one say
who speaks of Thee?
Augustine of Hippo

A Prayer of Praise

May none of God's wonderful works keep silence,
night or morning.
Bright stars,
high mountains,
the depths of the seas, sources of rushing rivers:
may all these break into song as we sing to God.
May all the angels in the heavens reply:
Amen, Amen, Amen.
Power, praise, honor, eternal glory to God,
the only Giver of Grace,
Amen, Amen, Amen.
Anonymous

Habakkuk's Prayer of Trust

Though the fig tree do not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will know joy in the God of my salvation.
Habakkuk 3. 17–18

Fertile Ground

GEERY S. HOWE

For more and more men and women, the ecological crisis is a call to recognize and celebrate the sacred inter-relatedness of all beings, seen and unseen.

I have walked and lived in the forest many, many times. It is a place of growth and stability. It is a place that changes constantly with the light streaming down through the many layers of leaves. There is stillness and life in the same breath. There are special places and beautiful havens which awaken the heart and the soul to higher levels of existence.

During one summer that I lived in the forest, I participated in an elaborate and very meaningful vision quest, modeled after the kind that young Native Americans take on their pathway to adulthood. I specifically remember the time of reflection as I sat alone upon a series of ledges that overlooked a valley and seven mountains. It was a time for introspection, illumination, and mindful prayer. After the allotted time of fasting and quietness, I and others in the group of questers returned to camp for a celebration and reunion with our friends, a time of rebirth into our new lives.

I remember, even now, the vivid images of the forest on the way down the mountain. I was a bit dazed and foggy in the head from the lack of water, sleep and food. The path was steep and I stumbled; my hands

Geery Howe, President of Morning Star Associates in West Branch, IA, is the author of Listen To The Heart: The Transformational Pathway to Health and Wellness. *His firm provides training programs, personal development seminars, and counseling services. You may call him at (319) 643-2257.*

went out in front of me. I landed at the base of a fallen tree. The wood of the tree was a dark red color; it was returning to the soil. Soft and crumbly to my fingers, the tree had long since died and now the stump and the rest of the log that lay upon the forest floor were melting slowly into the soil, being reclaimed by the wholeness of the forest. I was stunned by the significance. In death, there is life and in life there is always a recognition of the potential for transformation. The forest was alive and growing in a most beautiful manner around me. This crumbling tree was returning to its essence, fertile soil for new life.

> (The forest) is a place of growth and stability. It is a place that changes constantly with the light streaming down through the many layers of leaves. There is stillness and life in the same breath. There are special places and beautiful havens which awaken the heart and the soul to higher levels of existence.

When making a commitment to a stewardship perspective of living on this earth, one begins the process of honoring their essence. As John Travis, M.D. and Regina Ryan, point out in *The Wellness Workbook*: "We are energy transformers, connected with the whole universe. All life processes, including illness depend on how we manage energy." Health of the body, mind and spirit is intricately linked to the health of the earth.

Yet, for many people, the choice to live a healthy lifestyle is only a physical, body oriented experience. They forget, or do not recognize, their interconnectedness with the earth. To make a meaningful commitment to maximizing one's personal health potential in an integrated and balanced manner, one also must take time to develop a conscious awareness of how they interact with the earth, with its flora and fauna. In simple terms, we need to begin healing the body, the mind and spirit while fostering, and ultimately expanding, the larger perspective of our sacred connection with the earth and the universe as a whole.

Nurturing an attunement mentally with the natural environment through prayer is a starting place for this blending of stewardship and health. Furthermore, I believe that living a life of wellness, a pattern of inner and outer harmony through awareness, education and personal growth, is vitally linked with dedicating oneself to the principles of earth stewardship. Whole health of ourselves, and the planet is not a separate experience. Attunement to our impact upon them. In short, stewardship

Brooks Walsh

of the body and the earth is not a static state but a process of achieving continual revelation and understanding about how we interact with the earth as a whole.

Along the pathway toward the union of a stewardship philosophy and a wellness lifestyle, there comes a point when one can no longer straddle the fence. The old self, namely the way of thinking and living which is not awake to the natural laws of the living planet, must be released and be allowed to return to the Source, our sacred connection with the universe. Just like the forest floor which is in constant change and renewal, the development of a new consciousness about the interrelatedness of personal and planetary health is a rebirthing process. Prayer is an important part of this journey for it provides the opportunity for a larger perspective to be revealed. Prayer can be the midwife for a new consciousness about health of self and the earth.

While the returning of the old self to the fertile soil of the whole is at time a difficult and scary process, the cycle of life to death and then back to life is repeated throughout the natural world. It is the pattern of (the?) ages and is the pattern of change. What the caterpillar thinks is the end of the world, the butterfly knows is the beginning. Now is the time to begin this evolutionary process by making the commitment to touching the metaphoric heart of the earth and our bodies through prayer. For by touching this fertile ground of holistic growth and health, we will be healing ourselves and the earth. This is a loving act of harmony and health on all levels.

GAIA AND GOD: AN ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY OF EARTH HEALING

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Harper San Francisco, 1992, 310 pages, hard cover, $22.00.

Can the rupture between Gaia, the living and sacred earth, and God, as understood by the Western Christian patriarchy, be healed? On the answer depends the fate of the earth.

In her scholarly and passionate new book, Professor Ruether traces our present, and potentially terminal, crisis of ecological devastation, poverty, and militarism to the centuries-old alienation of men and women from each other and from the rest of God's creation by distorted understandings of Christianity's sacred texts. These interpretations justified domination and exploitation of women, "inferior" or subjugated classes and, in fact, all of God's creation by a ruling male elite.

There are as Ruether points out, however, powerful covenantal and sacramental traditions in Christianity that struggled to create just and loving relationships between men and women of all social classes and between humans, the earth, and the divine. It is this legacy, says Ruether, that needs to be reclaimed and that can lead us up out of the valley of the shadow of death.

These traditions need to be reshaped in ways that free them from patriarchal constructions and bring them into accord with contemporary scientific knowledge and global realities. The result, Ruether believes, could be "a healed society and planet that relies for security not in dominating power and the impossible quest for total invulnerability, but rather in the acceptance of vulnerability, limits, and interdependency with others; with other humans and with the earth." *PW*

A BLUE FIRE: SELECTED WRITINGS BY JAMES HILLMAN

Thomas Moore, Ed., Harper Perenial Edition, New York, 1991, 323 pages, paperback, $11.00.

An excellent introduction to James Hillman's archetypal psychology and his fascinating, poetic mind. Uplifting, challenging and filled with the love of beauty, the book ranges over a vast array of topics like "love's torturous enchantments" and "the divine face of things." A captivating

refrain has to do with soul and spirit: What is the difference between them?

Hillman associates "soul" with the dark and heavy, spirit with the high and light. Soul exists at the depths, while spirit ascends. Soul connotes mystery, felt experience, desire, longing, suffering, images, love and destiny. Spirit abstracts, refines, drives toward the sublime, is fast and abstract, like fire or wind. He puts it this way:

> Soul is at home in the deep, shaded valleys. Heavy torpid flowers saturated with black grow there. The rivers flow like warm syrup. They empty into huge oceans of soul. Spirit is a land of high, white peaks and glittering jewel-like lakes and flowers. Life is sparse and sounds travel great distances.

In other books, Hillman emphasizes the sterility of inner work–whether meditation or therapy–that isn't complemented by the "outer work" of service in the world. *MFG*

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE BODY

by Alexander Lowen, M.D., MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, 1990, 209 pages, hardback, $18.95.

This unconventional approach to the human spirit–through the body–makes some sense. Dr. Lowen builds on Carl Jung's belief that the spirit of men and women "is the inner experience of the body," while the body is "the outer manifestation of the spirit." Deliberately leaving aside the topic of the Divine Spirit, Lowen equates the "dispirited body" with unaliveness. "When the spirit moves the body," he writes, it quivers with excitement and bounds with enthusiasm, like a stream cascading down a mountainside, or it flows quietly, like a wide and deep river in a plain." His book shows that western civilization has come a long way from Cartesian dualism. *MFG*

Fellowship in Prayer welcomes your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Could you please send me a sample copy of the journal, *Fellowship in Prayer.* There are no English language bookstores here in Inner Mongolia where I might purchase it.

Walter Skold; Bao Tou, Inner Mongolia; People's Republic of China

I am enclosing a check for a two-year subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer* and for your booklet, *The Way of Prayer.*

My life these past few years has been difficult. I've had five surgeries in six years, two of them on my heart, which has not been easy to stabilize. Yet I thank God for our medical technology and for giving me the blessing of life in the here and now. It is not easy, but I accept all that has transpired in my journey back to God.

Your publication has been one of the positive aspects of these years. I cannot find words that adequately express my deep and sincere gratitude for *Fellowship in Prayer.* The time between issues seems interminable. Naturally I re-read many of the articles, but for a thirsty person, there never seems to be enough to totally quench the thirst.

God bless all of you in your work.

Sidney H. Stave; Salinas, CA

I was fortunate to discover your publication and learn about your work through the women's prison in Muncy, Pennsylvania. Friends' Meetings in this area join inmates there on Sunday afternoons.

Your interfaith dimension interests me, particularly in relation to spiritual practice groups in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. I monitor such groups for the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies.

Fellowship in Prayer brings these kinds of interfaith efforts to light. Thank you!

Gerald Cooke; Lewisburg, PA

Fellowship in Prayer is a wonderful publication. I credit your efforts with my return to a disciplined prayer life.

Marie D. Sheley; Houma, LA

I had the good fortune to find two copies of your publication at the laundry. I devoured both of them quickly. They were refreshing and very mind-opening. I thank God that I found *Fellowship in Prayer*, and I thank you.

Please enter a subscription in my name.

Linda Buchanan; Winston-Salem, NC

I have been on a journey for several years, up and down hills. For a long time they seemed so steep that I just didn't think they were negotiable. Then came your wonderful breath of fresh air. It has smoothed most of the hills and given me a sense of success. Thank you.

I can hardly wait for the next issue, to savor each and every article. One in particular spoke so clearly and positively to me that I would like to request permission to reprint it. It is Sheila Morgan's "Our Hunger for Connection." Our church, St. Augustine in-the-Woods Episcopal Church has a meeting every Wednesday night where issues are presented and discussed. I would like to share Sheila Morgan's article with the group.

Thank you and bless you.

Robert Walters; Clinton, WA

My mother reports that a dozen people in her retirement home read her copies of *Fellowship in Prayer.* A nice multiplier effect! Keep up the good work.

Richard Hughes; Austin, TX

I recently received a pass-along copy of your journal and find it to be one of the most inspirational and thought-provoking publications I have ever "experienced." I note that you offer free subscriptions to those unable to pay, and I would like to request that you add two names to your list. Mine, since I am incarcerated, and that of a friend of mine who has Multiple Sclerosis, is unable to work, and lives in a facility for the disabled.

Please also add my name to your Interfaith Network. Thank you.

James B.; Craigsville, VA

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

OFFICE (609) 924-6863
FAX (609) 924-6910

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EDITOR
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